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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MAR DE PLATA AND FTA, NOVEMBER
16, 2005

1. On 11/16 the Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily, "La Tribuna," published an op-ed by Jorge Valladares Valladares entitled, "Mercosur said no to FTAA." "In the Fourth Summit of the Americas, the most fruitful exchanges took place in the negotiation rooms after the official presidential speeches. It is clear from the lack of a final declaration that the countries in Mercosur, including Venezuela, are not sure of FTAA trade integration because it is a strategy designed and promoted from Washington." "Parallel to this summit, the Summit of the People and anti-FTAA movements took place, led on this occasion by former Nobel Peace winner, Adolfo Perez Esquivel."

"In Mar de Plata two visions of the economic integration of America were presented: the official unity from the presidents that hesitated to issue a document that had been in preparation for weeks. The other meeting (Summit of the People) issued a final declaration where they basically said a robust no to an FTA with the U.S. in the lead.."

"The lesson from the south is clear. The horrible experience lived in Argentina after the financial crisis gave them a lesson: When it comes to free trade absolutes are not good."

"The streets in the main cities of the southern cone saw protests; these nations understand that trade without clear rules does not benefit nations. They say yes to commerce between countries but under horizontal conditions and without advantages for big companies and nations. A new language is being spoken in these streets, a language that hasn't been added to the political declarations, where Latin America declares that it needs a just commerce. These are different concepts that Bush should put on his list of things to remember."

Ford